BEST WISHES
FOR 2011
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear teacher,

It really seems like yesterday that I was writing to you for the first time as the BT Newsletter editor. Time does seem to fly when you’re busy and having fun. As I write this, I can see holiday lights outside my window signaling the end of one more year. But I don’t feel it’s the end of anything – it’s the beginning of a new cycle.

Instead of going over the BT News issues as usual, I’ll let you flip through the pages and discover what we have in store for you by yourself.

This is not only the last issue of 2010, but also the last issue of the present BT Board – next time you read this, Jeff Stranks will be the one “talking” to you. In the next edition, a whole new group of people, chosen by you, will be busying themselves with keeping BT the lively association it is today.

Being part of BT has been one of the greatest learning experiences of my personal and professional life. All the hard work, the rewards, and the compromise that come with the job, helped me grow and prosper. A huge thanks to everyone who helped with the BT News, but a special thanks to you, BT Member, for whom we make this publication and the reason of the BT existence.

I wish the new board all the success in the world!!!

Best wishes,
Daphne Walder
BT 2nd Vice President 2009-2010
Dear Fellow BRAZ-TESOLers,

It is time for the 2009 – 2010 board to say farewell and welcome the newly elected 2011 – 2012 team.

After four years of intensive involvement in BRAZ-TESOL, first as 1st Vice President and then as President, I feel quite gratified to see that BRAZ-TESOL is headed in the right direction to meet the needs of Teachers of English in Brazil. Needless to say, I am especially proud to be leaving BRAZ-TESOL in a solid financial situation.

During the past two years we have seen a revitalization of some chapters, the creation of new (Manaus, Rio Grande do Norte), and the groundwork for the setting up of a São Paulo State Chapter. The achievements of this board include the extremely successful 12th BRAZ-TESOL National convention, partnerships with TESOL for events and the British Council for teacher development courses. The convention provided the energy and enthusiasm for the emergence of new SIGs (“Bilingualism,” “Teaching One-to-One” and “Young Learners & Teens”).

I am grateful for this opportunity to thank the outgoing board - Cris Gontow, Daphne Walder, Maria Teresa Aranda, Marciana de Freitas and Sonia Godoy—as well as the people on this board who have been re-elected and will continue to dedicate their efforts to the growth of BT: Ligia Pereira (now 1st Vice President), Graeme Hodgson and Paul Berry (who will continue on the Advisory Council). These members, all volunteers, have been instrumental in helping our organization make significant strides forward.

A very special welcome to the newcomers and returnees to the executive board: Jeff Stranks (2nd Vice President), Veruska Gallo (Secretary), Viviane Kirmeliene (Treasurer), Andreza Lago, Everton Malvesi, Florinda Marques and Julio Menochelli who are now joining the Advisory Council.

And finally, I am very pleased to be leaving BRAZ-TESOL in the capable hands of Vinicius Nobre. I am confident that his creativity and indefatigable energy will inspire the new board and keep BRAZ-TESOL focused on its mission, which is to support teachers of English and promote best teaching practices in Brazil.

I wish you all a wonderful 2011!

Marie Adele Ryan
BT President 2009-2010
The BT Chapters are alive and kicking, holding events all over the country! See some pictures about events held by some chapters in October and November.

**BT Event in Natal - October 23rd**

Over 50 participants gathered for the second event of the BRAZ-TESOL RN Chapter, which took place at FAL. Fernando Guarany, President of the RN chapter, opened the event by introducing the local board and stressing the importance of teachers from all segments getting together to promote training and development in RN. Then, Marcelo de Cristo, teacher trainer from Cultura Inglesa Recife, engaged the audience with a workshop on the practicalities of teaching pronunciation. After a delicious coffee-break, Edilson Souza, professor and researcher at uFRN, delivered a thought-provoking workshop which stimulated teachers to think about how they assign topics for writing activities. The closing plenary on the sustainability of Teachers’ Associations delivered by Roddy Kay, President of the BRAZ-TESOL Pernambuco Chapter, raised questions on what makes a chapter strong. He gave participants some sensible suggestions on how to deal with the problems and challenges which a local chapter is likely to face. And to cap it all, after each workshop, The QuAQ – Quasi Actors Quartet, directed by Steve Barlow, a member of our board’s advisory council, entertained the participants with two humorously amusing sketches.

Reported by Fernando Guarany

1. Ana Beatriz Guilherme (Vice President); 2. Alberto Costa (Guest Speaker – Launch Event); 3. Nelson Rosenberg (Volunteer); 4. Marcelo de Cristo (Advisor); 5. Fernando Guarany (President); 6. Dyêgo Saraiva (Volunteer); 7. Edilson Souza (2nd Vice President); 8. Ana Graça Canan (Advisor); 9. Fiona Porpino (Secretary); 10. Michelle Gueiros (Volunteer); 11. Vilma Sampaio (Guest speaker / Former National BT President)

**BT Event in Manaus - October 29th**

BRAZ-TESOL Manaus Chapter held its fifth event, “Celebrating two years of Excellence in Teaching English”, at Livraria Lira. It was a whole-day event in which participants could brush up their knowledge on vocabulary, teacher development and corpus linguistics. The speakers were Paul Seligson (Richmond Publishing), Fausto Rabelo (CUP), Najin Lima (Pearson Longman) and Vinicius Nobre, who gave a talk and represented the board.

Reported by Herman Thury

**BT Event in Brasília - November 5th**

BRAZ-TESOL chapter Brasília had its first event organized by the new board, at Livraria Cultura Casa Park. We had one guest speaker, Cláudio Azevedo, owner of the awesome http://www.moviesegmentstoassessgrammargoons.blogspot.com. Cláudio discussed the importance of sharing and connecting with other English language teachers using his own experience to support his arguments.

Cláudio’s talk was followed by a Pecha Kucha session. Drawing its name from the Japanese term for the sound of “chit chat”, Pecha Kucha rests on a presentation format that is based on a simple idea: 20 slides x 20 seconds. There were seven Pecha Kucha presentations connected by the theme of the event. You can see the Pecha Kucha presentations on our YouTube channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/BrazTESOLBsB you can read more about the event and also news about our chapter by following our blog at http://www.braztesolregional.com, our twitter account (@braztesolbsb) and by joining our group on Facebook (BrazTESOL Brasilia).

Reported by Henrick Oprea
BT Event in Curitiba - October 22nd

Maggie Pacheco, Florinda Marques, Carmen Koppe and Izabel Corção

Would you like to know if there’s a chapter in your area? Check the list below.

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V English for All Talent Show. A special night

Near 500 people got together on October 27th, 2010, at Clube Paineiras do Morumbi in São Paulo – SP for 5th English For All Talent Show.

This nearly fund raising event presents “talented” amateur singers. It is a not only a fun event but a vital means to raise resources for the association and promote its noble purpose of taking the English language to all!

BRAZ-TESOL supported the event and was represented by Claudia Cavalcante (Office Manager) Marie Adele (BT President), Vinicius Nobre (BT 1st Vice President), Ligia Pereira (BT Treasurer) and Albina Escobar (BT Advisory Board member).

We’d like to take this opportunity to invite teachers interested in becoming volunteer teacher in 2011!

For more information: www.efall.org.br

11- 3032 0413

Contributed by Teli Cardoso, EFALL President and BT member

Se você quer saber a resposta, experimente dar uma aula e doar seu saber... receba então muitos carinhos, sorrisos, abraços... receba amor! Visite o site www.efall.org.br e conheça melhor o trabalho dos seus responsáveis.

PARTICIPE, TORNE-SE UM VOLUNTEACHER E SEJA UM CIDADÃO MAIS COMPLETO E FELIZ!
This issue of the Show and Tell is a collection of special BT moments from the past 2 years. They represent all the hard work, the joy and rewards that define working as a volunteer for an association like BRAZ-TESOL.

Past Presidents: Donald Occhiuzzo, Marie Adele Ryan, Marcelo Barros and Nadia Sarkis at the cocktail party for the launching of the 12th BT National Convention in December 2009.


BT Manaus Chapter Event - October, 2009.


These days there seems to be a growing sense that there is never enough time to do all we want to do and that life is whizzing by at an untouchable velocity. As a result of this speed it seems that childhood too is being shortened. What we see are children who are mini adults of 5 telling their parents which school they want to go to, what clothes they want to wear, what food they won’t eat, etc. Not to mention the increase in child obesity due to a total lack of movement, physical, mental and spiritual. Children don’t know how to play anymore and if the toy comes without batteries they are at a total loss as to what to do with it and incapacitated to invent something from nothing. Increasingly parallel to this, we can observe how desperately children need to find new ways to deal with their self evaluation and self image. What needs to be brought back into the classroom is something very simple – the chance to use one of mans most precious instruments – IMAGINATION. By feeding children’s imagination in an appropriate way, we are laying down the foundations to a balanced and fulfilling future existence.

There is no denying that we are living in an impressive digital era and although this brings a great number of advantages to a lot of our daily tasks we should be aware that it is not necessarily helpful to the younger child. According to recent research in childhood development, movement, music, art and culture is of fundamental importance. When we are engaged in artistic processes, we have a conversation with our inner being. In most activities of daily life we respond to an outer world, but art allows us to awaken an inner eye to imagination and inspiration. I think the Romans got it right as they believed the essential ingredients to a healthy life were bread, water and circus. That is why we should urgently be re-thinking the role of ‘play’ in our classrooms.

When a child is involved in natural and free imaginative play, he is always making new discoveries, finding new alternatives. Children are biologically programmed in this way and need only the correct stimulus to do what they know how to do best - PLAY. Later on this will help the child to become a free thinking adult with original ideas and a flexible approach to problems and challenges.

When time is an issue unfortunately one of the first things to be cut both in schools and in the

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Just Imagine - Why imaginative play is of fundamental importance in a child’s education

With a background in classical theatre and TFL, Lucy Crichton is a teacher, teacher trainer and storyteller who has given lectures both nationally and internationally. She is the co-author of Lucky and Me, a two level primary course book for children and a new storytelling component, Time to Tell a Story, both published by Macmillan. Her latest interests include therapeutic storytelling and the study of the four temperaments by Rudolf Steiner.

“... if the toy comes without batteries they (children) are at a total loss as to what to do with it ...”

“... we should urgently be re-thinking the role of ‘play’ in our classrooms.”
local community is art and music. When I first started teaching in 1993 in a vestibular school even languages were considered a less important subject and maths and chemistry the ‘crème de la crème’ of intelligent beings. One only has to look at the advertising billboards around town at the beginning of the year to see children dressed up as doctors and engineers, as if those were the only successful possibilities. This needs to change and we must start by instilling in our young students a deeper connection to their inner worlds and the wealth of creative energy they have at their fingertips. Parents and teachers need to stimulate a sense of awe and wonderment in their children, and not a mechanical, objective, analytical reality.

The Classroom Environment

I understand that when thinking about a space that will be used by children we immediately think about practicality and hygiene. That the floor is easy to sweep, that the walls won’t show dirty finger prints etc. Another thing we do is look around to see what kind of materials the market offers us for children. What we find is rubber mats with predominantly primary colors, cartoon posters and the like. While these may look jolly and childlike we are missing an opportunity to include other subtle colors and forms that give our students space to create without bringing them something ‘ready’. For pre-schoolers it’s especially important that their new classroom reflects their own home environment in some way, by having a carpeted area, some cushions, maybe a sofa, a vase of flowers. A cosy space and the feeling of security will help them to adapt more easily to their new reality.

By having some simple and low cost materials in our classrooms we are giving our students an empty canvas on which they will paint amazing masterpieces!

Here are a few ideas that can encourage imaginative play in our classrooms:

Cloth – Have a least 10 different pieces of cloth of varying colors and textures. These can be used for any number of things, for example:

- A deep blue cloth for a river, the sea, the night sky
- A light green cloth for grass, a forest, a mountain
- A gold cloth for the sun, a field of corn or pirate’s treasure
- A piece of thick brown material for the earth where farmers could plant their crops, children can wade through mud or dip their fingers into a huge chocolate cake
- A piece of white silky cloth for a cloud, an angel, porridge in a pot
- Smaller coloured pieces of cloth can be tied into knots and represent pieces of fruit
- A large piece of cloth to drape over a table and make a special den
- Pieces of cloth that can be tied around children’s necks, waist etc like princes’ cloaks, reigns for a horse, a special skirt etc.

The cloth can also be used to hide under, to sit on at story time, or to decorate a birthday table.

Objects from Nature – Have a selection of stones for building and counting, pieces of wood for bridges, seeds, seed pods and dried beans and corn that can be used for ‘cooking’. This kind of material can be much nicer than plastic vegetables because children can invent new ideas.

Images and Pictures – Suitable images for children’s classrooms are those that have softer contours and colouring that show depth and subtlety and that have positive and beautiful images. In this way we are showing the students images that play with their imagination therefore encouraging greater effort and achievement in what they do in the classroom.

Music – Have a selection of percussion instruments (some can simply be made from recyclable material) which you can use to call the group’s attention or at the beginning/end of a story. They can be used for sound effects, chants and rhythm rhymes. It is as also important for the younger learners to hear the teacher’s true voice in songs rather than always using the class CD.

Puppets – Steer away from puppets that have readymade faces, big eyes or strange mouths and use handmade sock puppets or pieces of cloth wrapped round your hand.

Conclusion

Young children unconsciously look for some signal from their world that their true inner needs are being met which is why as educators we must realize that there is so much at stake. If children feel safe and happy in their school environment, learning will flow but so much damage can be done if we are not well prepared and apt for the job. Being a teacher of children is a privilege and a task not to be taken lightly. When choosing teachers for young children, school owners and coordinators should choose excellent teachers who are mature and skilled for the job because they are laying down the firm foundations for all that follows. We must keep informed and practice in our own lives what we teach in our classrooms; and when we leave our houses on a Monday morning to go to work we must take generous doses of intuition, humility, simplicity and sensibility along with us.

“If children feel safe and happy in their school environment, learning will flow ...”
How are BRAZ-TESOL members contributing to teacher development?

Richmond would like to thank these ELT professionals who effectively contributed to the first volume of Richmond Reflections – Inglês na sala de aula: ação e reflexão, which contains articles aimed at triggering teachers' reflection upon their beliefs, actions, and the challenges of the profession.

Sandra Possas
Editorial Manager – Richmond

- Jacira Guiterrez Motta
- Ernesto Pasqualin
- Claudia Maria Vasconcelos Lopes
- Roberta Orlando
- Eduardo Amos
- Janaína Cardoso
- Bislele Março Bastos Pêrigo
- Elaine Chaves Hodgson
- Luciana Pimentel
- Florinda Scremin Marques
- Vinicius Nobre
- Luciana de Oliveira Silva
- Marcelo Furtin
- Guilherme Bomfim Pacheco
- Elisabeth Prescher

- BRAZ-TESOL is offering a complimentary copy to the first 100 members who apply.
- Call (11) 3559-8782 or write to braztesol@braztesol.org.br
This section of BT Member Recommends brings Carlos Gontow, with a fun suggestion to take the stress away from the learning process. Can you guess? Akinator can!

Carlos Gontow is an English teacher, teacher trainer and actor and has been involved with teaching English through theater, music and games for more than twenty years. He’s the author of the book “The Classroom is a Stage – 40 Short Plays for English Students,” published by DISAL. He’s also the author of the blog “Dicas Para Aprender Inglês” (http://dicasingles.wordpress.com).

The language learning process is time consuming and stress provoking. Individual psychological factors and student-teacher chemistry may also raise the stress level to a point at which it interferes with student attention and efficiency and weakens motivation. We can say that stress is a major hindrance in the language learning process.

There have been many attempts to solve this problem. One idea is to develop activities to make students forget that they are in class, that is, to relax students by engaging them in stress-reducing tasks. That is why games are so important in the English-teaching world today.

Games are a natural, playful means of learning and expression enjoyed from childhood. We can all remember games from our childhood - games that we loved and played again and again. Games are an important part of play activity, so essential to human development in all cultures.

There are several games that can be played online, and I would like to recommend one that is really fun and helps students to review question formation. It is called “Akinator” (http://en.akinator.com/).

Akinator is a genie and he can guess what you are thinking. Think about a real or fictional character. The genie will try to guess who it is. He will ask you a question. You click on one of the five possible answers – Yes, probably / partially, I don’t know, Probably not / Not really or No. After 20 questions, he guesses who the person is, and even shows their picture. It’s really amazing, because he is almost always right. When he is wrong, you can declare yourself the winner, or you can have a second round of questions.

Although all you have to do is click on one of the answers, the game is an excellent opportunity to review question forms, because the genie asks you all sorts of questions. You can play this game at school if you have a computer with Internet connection in your classroom, and students can also play it at home. They will practice their English and also have a lot of fun.
PLN: The paradigm shift in teacher and learner autonomy

Vance Stevens was an ESL teacher for 20 years and has since moved through CALL coordination and commercial ESL software development to consultancy in CALL environments to his current position as lecturer in computing at Petroleum Institute, Abu Dhabi. He is the coordinator of The Webheads, a community of practice of hundreds of language teachers online. He has been working for the past decade on promoting professional development and learner autonomy via social media and collaboration in online spaces.

In 1998 I started teaching an online EFL class that met in The Palace, where each teacher and student interacted in text chat using an avatar. I created a web page for the students, called it Writing for Webheads, and we had soon accumulated numerous student photos and writings online (still viewable at http://prosites-vstevens.homestead.com/files/efi/webheads.htm). When we installed a voice plugin on the website so students could talk with one another and to the world at large, we invited the world to our chats and caught the attention of teachers worldwide. In 2002 I conducted an EVO or TESOL Electronic Village Online class to model to teachers how to start such online communities, and Webheads in Action was born, http://webheads.info.

The Webheads community has remained robust for a dozen years now. It has hundreds or perhaps a thousand members in its various online spaces. We have met each Sunday at noon GMT at http://tappedin.org for the past decade, around 600 consecutive weeks now. We have put on three major online conferences for free, http://wiaoc.org/. Members still send a dozen mails a day via our YahooGroup mailing list (well over 25,000 messages in all; http://groups.yahoo.com/group/evonline2002_webheads/), and we have been the subject of several dissertations studying communities of practice, even attracting the attention of Etienne Wenger in this regard.

Many people calling themselves Webheads teach all over the globe, and many of these are in South America, especially in Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela. Normally we collaborate online, but occasionally we are able to meet in person. I met several Webheads from South America when they obtained grants to attend the last WorldCall conference in Fukuoka, and I have met several dynamic Brazilian Webheads such as Barbara Dieu and Carla Arena at TESOL conferences in the USA.

Webheads are one key component of a network of educators who collaborate constantly online, ...”
view as a Venn set of constantly interacting and overlapping PLN contain huge potential for ensuring that teachers remain lifelong learners, and are thus able to inculcate a passion for lifelong learning in their students and in one another.

Too often teachers are put in situations which are labeled professional development but which in reality are (a) driven top-down, (b) don’t address teacher needs, and (c) do not lead to development. Teachers who drive their own professional development through participation in PLNs constantly express and address each other’s needs, and promote professional development on an as-needed basis, from where it is only a short leap to applying it to students.

Social networking is a term that was coined a century ago, so the notion is not new, but technology has given that notion vastly expanded scale and dimension. Last century our networks were limited to those we met or corresponded with, but now we can consider our networks to encompass not only those we know but also those who know the ones we know, and so on. In theory, any knowledge in that greater network should be accessible to any individual node within that network, and theories such as connectivism have emerged to explain how this works for educators who engage each other online.

This means that our dream of lifelong learning becomes a reality easily within our grasp, but it also carries with it a grave responsibility. As educators, we are charged with exploring new ways of learning and guiding our students into constructive uses of the potentials and affordances of technology best suited to leveraging that learning. This is our great challenge as we enter an era where we must empower future knowledge workers with 21st century skills to enable them to cope with the demands we can’t anticipate of jobs that haven’t even been invented yet.

In order to meet this challenge we must retool the way we conceive and approach education. This summer I plan to come to BRAZ-TESOL to speak about ten “paradigm shifts” that teachers need to understand in order to apply them in transformative ways to students (see Stevens, 2009).

As educators, we are charged with exploring new ways of learning and guiding our students into constructive uses of the potentials and affordances of technology ...

Used correctly, technology can greatly facilitate the process of any kind of learning, language learning in particular; incorrectly it can be an obstacle. I hope to explain that using technology is less about interfaces and settings than about having a theory of learning, and adapting technology tools to foster development in a subject matter in ways commensurate with that model of learning. Web 2.0 is the driving force for technology to be applied in constructivist and connectivist models of learning. I explain how such tools can enable learners to leave artifacts online where other learners can find and interact with them, intrinsically motivating students to produce quality work in response to a palpable awareness of audience. I will explain how tagging and RSS enable students to move away from the old ways of information dissemination to find one another online, themselves control this interaction, and utilize it in their learning. In order for teachers to grasp the fundamentals of applying technology to transformative learning, practice with peers is necessary, where teachers themselves become mentors for one another while sharing discoveries and experiences. I plan to suggest ways that teachers can develop their own personal learning networks to ensure their continuous lifelong learning, and cultivate ‘teacher autonomy’, where the teachers are in their roles by virtue of being ‘master learners.’

I hope to help frame for teachers how their role vis a vis their students has changed already this century. I hope to show how making the necessary paradigm shifts should apply in transformative ways to students, how Web 2.0, tagging, and RSS are crucial to this process, and how teachers can develop their own personal learning networks to practice continuous lifelong learning and ‘teacher autonomy’ before applying it to students.

References
Stevens, Vance. (2009). Modeling Social Media in Groups, Communities, and Networks. TESL-EJ, Volume 13, Number 3:
http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/past-issues/volume13/ej51/ej51int/

"Used correctly, technology can greatly facilitate the process of any kind of learning, language learning in particular; incorrectly it can be an obstacle.”

* Note: Vance Stevens was invited to write this article prior to presenting at the 12th BRAZ-TESOL National Convention in July.
There are mountains of evidence from recent research into the workings of the child’s brain that early foreign language learning, if done properly, can contribute significantly to the cognitive development of the child.

These findings come on top of observations of how young children are especially well able to learn a foreign language. As Susan Halliwell (1992) has pointed out, they bring along a whole set of specific aptitudes or skills which include, for example:
- The ability to grasp meaning.
- The ability to manage with limited linguistic means.
- The ability to learn indirectly.
- The ability to learn through fantasy and imagination.
- The ability to interact and speak.

The latest research into the human thought process and the question of how we can best support the development of a child’s thinking capacity reveals a further important capacity that children possess.

Children potentially have the ability to think and to think about their thinking.

Why potentially? Cognitive psychologists (see for example Fisher 1992) stress that thinking is not some natural function like breathing, walking, seeing and talking. Thinking does not necessarily improve with age and experience. Thinking needs to be developed. Thinking needs to be facilitated alongside the child’s acquisition of the new language.

Although research is still a long way from having fathomed out all the secrets of the human brain, there is already a body of findings which provide us with valuable insights into the workings of the brain. Many of these findings are very exciting and of immediate relevance to language teaching.

There is evidence that what we need in order to learn language successfully is not so much talent, or the famous L.A.D. (language acquisition device), but a number of highly diverse cognitive skills and mental acts, underlying which there is a repertoire of basic thinking processes. Lipman (1991) offers an interesting metaphor in order to illustrate this: When we watch a car mechanic at work, we notice that he has some basic skills that makes it possible for him to use the individual tools he has in his tool kit, like a screwdriver, a wrench, pliers etc. Most of us share these basic skills. What we do not have, however, is the special knowledge that the car mechanic has that tells him how to organise and sequence the use of these tools in order to successfully repair a car. Likewise, in Fisher’s words, “The higher order skills that we use when we engage in elaborate and sophisticated thinking are not different skills, but the same skills used in more sophisticated combination.” (Fisher 1992, p. ix)

Children process information in the same way as expert adults, but expert adults have more efficient networks and processing systems. In
Gardner’s words, “The un-schooled 5-year-old has very powerful ideas and theories which he or she attempts to apply everywhere. The mind of that child is original, rich and creative, but often subscribes to explanations which are simplistic or misconceived. [...] If a student is to ‘understand deeply,’ he or she must immerse himself or herself in the subject matter, learning to think of it and to approach it in a variety of ways.” (Anglin 1993, pp. 32 - 33)

Facilitating deep understanding in the young learners’ classroom

The reason why teaching young learners is such a great opportunity and a real challenge is the fact that we can help them develop what Howard Gardner above calls “deep understanding” of what they are learning. Deep understanding in our case does not of course mean that the purpose is to get six-year-olds to develop a linguist’s metacognitive understanding of the syntax or the morphology of the language they are learning. Deep understanding means that children develop a genuine interest in what they are learning and a curiosity to find out more about it. Deep understanding goes beyond mere mechanical learning of a few songs and rhymes and dialogues.

Deep understanding happens when children’s intelligence (or rather “intelligences”) are activated at the same time as they are learning a new language. Deep understanding happens when children solve a problem, learn to think critically and become creative. Deep understanding happens when children learn to focus their visual and auditory attention and perception. Deep understanding happens when children immerse themselves in the rhythm of the foreign language and react to it with their body and their heart. Deep understanding happens when children develop empathy with others and learn to view the world through another person’s eyes. Deep understanding happens when children start to think about their thinking.

If teaching a foreign language to young learners offers opportunities to develop the important capabilities mentioned above, we need to furnish teachers with materials and methods that can provide appropriate support for these processes.

References


Fischer, R. (1992) Teaching Children to Think Cheltenham: Stanley Thomes


* Note: Herbert Puchta was invited to write this article prior to presenting at the 12th BRAZ-TESOL National Convention in July.
PRONUNCIATION COURSE

The building blocks of pronunciation

Pronunciation has often been considered the Cinderella or the Ugly Duckling of English language teaching. Yet, many teachers-to-be, novice and experienced teachers have increasingly expressed the need to learn and integrate pronunciation into their linguistic competence and into their teaching.

This twelve-hour course will be given by the Pronunciation SIG Central Committee: Betty Pow, Heloisa Ortiz, Silvia Correa and Sonia Godoy. It is intended for teachers with little or no familiarity with pronunciation, and will focus on pronunciation priorities by raising awareness of elements that can be problematic for Brazilians. Through practical activities, the course will aim at helping ELT professionals become more confident listeners and speakers. Course contents will include segmentals (vowels, diphthongs and consonants), as well as supra segmentals (word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation). Pronunciation books will be raffled at the end of the course.

When? March 18, March 23, April 1, and April 8, 2011
What time? 2 pm – 5 pm
Where? At CNA Administração Nacional, in Paraíso, São Paulo
How much? FREE OF CHARGE for BT Members, but places are limited!
Questions? Write to pronunciationsig@braztesol.org.br

NLP COURSE

Coming soon to Brazil:
Special course with neurolinguistic programming (NLP) expert Jane Revell, in sponsorship with the British Council
Exclusive to BT members
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BRAZ-TESOL is proud to announce a major partnership with the British Council to offer professional development opportunities to our associates.

Through this partnership, our Chapters will deliver several options of teacher development courses to their associates at excellent cost-benefit.

To launch this partnership, we are running Classroom Language, which is a practical course for novice teachers, focused on developing participants’ confidence and skills in delivering their English lessons. The main aim of the course is to give teachers opportunities to reflect on and develop their use of ELT methodology.

If you are interested in taking the course, please contact the Chapter closest to you to check when it will be available in your region.

The first Classroom Language course in Natal was a huge success! The second course will be run in January. For further information, contact the Natal Chapter.”
BT: Odla, tell us about how you became an English teacher.

Odla: Becoming an English Teacher was a kind of need since I had finished all my English Course levels at SCBEU Recife and I had no other level options to take. I still remember when my last teacher said, “Well, try teaching, it is the best way to keep studying English”. And that was what I did... since then, I cannot see myself doing anything else but teaching English.

BT: You live in São Luís, Maranhão. What are the negative and positive aspects of being an English teacher in the Northeast of Brazil?

Odla: I am actually from Recife, Pernambuco, but I can consider myself half “maranhense” since I have been living in this part of Brazil for almost sixteen years now. I can assure you that moving to São Luís was one of the best things that could happen to my professional life. The market welcomes professionals who speak English fluently and also know didactics and methodology, and work with passion. The only negative thing that I feel here is not having many opportunities of ELT conferences, conventions, lectures and training sessions. However, traveling to those kinds of events makes my professional development even more motivational due to the sharing of experiences I may have.

BT: How did you decide to focus your career on private English teaching?

Odla: It happened in a very natural way. Some students who used to have classes with me at English language institutes started coming to me and ask, “why don’t you give private classes”? Well, at first it sounded kind of weird, since I had never had any experience like that. On the other hand, I always thought about developing a kind of method that would meet students’ needs. That is how the idea of the “language coaching” started. I help students not only with their English skills improvement, but I also help them being more confident when speaking and writing. It has been an awesome experience since then. Nowadays I have around 15 students (young adults and adults) who decide to rely on one-to-one classes.

BT: You participated in two BT National Conferences (Fortaleza in 2008, São Paulo in 2010). What did you learn from them?

Odla: Being a BT member and taking part in some Conferences gave me the way to learn a lot from great international and important authors such as David Crystal and Jeremy Harmer, for example; as well as attend several workshops on one-to-one teaching that introduced me to wonderful teachers all over Brazil who develop a beautiful work in this area and also made our SIG possible (Teaching One-To-One SIG).

BT: We know you organize lots of different events and activities for your students. Tell us about an important moment or special experience that made you proud of being an English teacher.

Odla: English Teaching is a ‘state of mind’. I am always trying to have something challenging and brand new with my private students. But there was a special activity we had at the mall that really worked perfectly! I have an upper-intermediate level group focused on speaking (the keep talking group) and on this special day we were talking about compulsive shopping, and we decided to meet at the mall…only girls…it was great! Five compulsive shoppers talking about ‘buying or not buying’... and I can assure you that no one bought anything! We ate a lot, anyway. Sharing ideas, experiences and caring is something that makes me very proud.

BT: What are your plans for the future?

Odla: I am trying my best to take an M.A. in English teaching... It is kind of hard since there are no courses available in my area. Meanwhile, I spend my days planning the classes ... I am making my dreams come true through my students! I also have my own site (www.odla.com.br)... it is another plan coming true.

* Language coaching is a term which normally refers to English language learning and teaching but with a special emphasis on a coach encouraging learner independence or autonomous learning in higher-level learners of the language. (www.wikipedia.org)

Odla Albuquerque is from Recife, PE but has been in São Luís, MA for 16 years. She has a BA in Administration and Letras (Portuguese/English) and is also a FCE and ECPE holder. She has worked for over 20 years as a teacher and course coordinator in franchising and bi-national centers and currently teaches English at Universidade Federal do Maranhão and Portuguese and English Professor at Faculdade São Luís. Teaching one-to-one is her passion.
Why is it that most of our students whine that they are able to almost fully understand what we say in the classroom but when faced with English in a real-life situation, the level of comprehension falls to near bottom, leading to their puzzlement, frustration and despair (in that order)?

Some reasons for the phenomenon: teachers use a special language called teacherese. It is a tailored form of the English language, which allows students to follow and obtain at least a global comprehension of what is being uttered. The speed is toned down somewhat, the lexis is full of Portuguese-like cognates so as to help students make necessary associations and/or simultaneous translations. Its linguistic variation is limited, especially at lower proficiency levels.

But what is most noteworthy of teacherese is that its inability to stretch students’ listening skills may lie more in the fact that teachers, non-native in particular, barely use the rich idiomatic language that is used in magazines, newspapers, TV shows, movies, songs - in short, in real life situations that they usually face. This lexis may not necessarily be second nature to ELT professionals, hence its absence in everyday use in the classroom.

Another reason: apart from using teacherese, most teachers don’t have any legitimate speaking opportunities outside of the classroom, thus reducing their oral skills to instructional and explanatory phrases or typical fixed expressions prescribed in the course book. Giving these educators opportunities to use the language naturally - be it in conversational settings arranged by the institutions or with native speakers in loco or online - may be crucial to whittle away at the problem.

A third and final reason: familiarity breeds ease, which in turn breeds comprehension. The more time students stay with a said teacher, the easier it might be for them to understand them and get used to their accent, intonation, lexical choice and pace. This is a point that cannot be ignored and is worth looking into.

So the question we need to ask ourselves is: how effective is the language we use in the classroom and to what extent this effectiveness plays a vital role in helping our students understand the world around them in English? After all, in a communicative context, the teacher is but should not be the ultimate language model for the students, so students should not gauge their listening competence by the teacher. The catch is exposing students to more and more real language in the classroom and fostering effective listening strategies.
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